



# Northwest Regional Office



**NOAA Fisheries**

**National Marine Fisheries Service**

## News Release

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### ***Washington Man Fined \$7,000 for Killing Sea Lion***

A 55-year-old Olympia man has been fined \$7,000 for shooting and killing a California sea lion on the Lewis River in Woodland, Wash., last April. The fine, one of the largest ever brought against an individual in the Pacific Northwest under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act, resulted from an investigation by law enforcement agents with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), a division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The investigation was triggered when witnesses reported the shooting to NOAA Fisheries officials. When NOAA law enforcement agents interviewed the Olympia man he said he shot the sea lion because it was eating young salmon and interfering with fishing.

Vicki Nomura, the head of the NOAA office for law enforcement in Seattle, said she considered the violation an “egregious” one.

“It’s inevitable that there will be interactions with marine mammals along our coast and throughout the sound, because we’ve encroached on their habitat,” she said. “But that’s hardly an excuse for what happened here.

“By letting people know what the law is – and what the consequences of violating it are – we stand a better chance of protecting these animals,” she added.

“Killing this animal simply because it was considered a nuisance can only be categorized as poor stewardship,” said Bruce Bjork, chief of the state fish and wildlife department’s enforcement program. “We’re totally committed to working with our colleagues in NOAA Fisheries to ensure sound stewardship and enjoyment of our marine resources for generations to come.”

In addition to the federal fine, the man pled guilty to illegally hunting protected wildlife, a misdemeanor charge under state law, and paid a \$750 fine.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act dates from 1972 and protects seals and sea lions, as well as whales and porpoises. It provides civil penalties of up to \$11,000 and criminal penalties of up to \$100,000 or a year in jail or both.

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